It was on the eve of Sam's seventh birthday that Dean stumbled back to the hotel from a hunt, smeared in blood, his clothes ripped to shreds. The night dad hit the bottle long before making sure he got himself and his eldest son back safely, the next morning impala reeking of that familiar bar house smell, complete with sweat and blood and fear. The night dad was so furious that Sam could feel his anger wafting through the small hotel room space like flames. And the night his brother's mouth formed the words he couldn't hear but would never forget.

"I wish I could have your silence Sammy. Just for a few minutes."

—

His world wasn't silent. It had never been silent. But at seven years old he finally understood that even though his world was part of Dean's, part of dad's, neither of them would ever fully understand it. And even though he belonged to them and they to him, he would always be separate.

He'd learned to read by then. He was different, not like everyone else, wrong, twisted. He needed to know why, he needed to understand. So when he looked at himself in the mirror he had a name for what he was. When he saw the one furiously blue eye staring back at him, stark contrast from the green, at least a small part of his existence would make sense. He was a level II freak. Somewhere in the world, the type III's had cleft lips and facial deformations and stunted arms. He was seven years old, alone in his own head and afraid. But he understood even then that he was different for a reason. That there was a mysterious purpose in this glassy blue eye, the prematurely white hair at his temples, the inability to hear his brother's words. That his world would never be silent but that Dean would never understand this, that his older brother was simply not meant to understand. In this, Sam was alone.

So he learned to read mouths, gestures, facial expressions. He learned to read the wind on his face and the vibrations under his feet and the way shadows moved. His skin had seemed eager to soak up what his ears couldn't. At twelve years old he'd managed to pin Dean down in a wrestling match. At fourteen he could smell the jasmine flowers across the thruway, his nose picking out their sweet scent out of the mixture of gasoline, exhaust and beer. At sixteen, in one of the millions of schools he only passed through, he dodged a rock. A rock thrown at his head, while his back was turned. And if someone had asked him how, he would have never been able to explain it fully. How to explain being able to feel the scuffle of the feet behind him as if the asphalt itself had become his conduit? The change in the air behind him, so obvious that the hairs on his neck seemed to dance. The sudden drop in his stomach, his entire body letting him know that something was coming.

His world was not silent. It was a fountain of scents and textures and thrums of voices, a primeval beat no one else understood, no one else could hear.

He understood that these things, these ways he'd adopted had only made him more wrong. Unnatural. He saw it in the faces of the people around him who thought that just because he couldn't hear them, their whispers would go unnoticed. He even saw it in the way dad looked at him sometimes, those few rare instances when his face was unguarded, wondering whether his youngest son was a curse or a blessing. Sam had no answers.

At twenty he was hunting with Dean by his side. Picking up cases from the currents in the air, the scent of wendigo lair across the forest, the lingering cold of a ghost two days gone, the rotten stench of vampire teeth. By twenty-two his brother was following his lead. With dad gone up in flames, the world under their feet shifting, new darkness emerging, Dean adopted his silence. Their world became one of touches and gestures, a never ending hunt, the destination unknown and unimportant. Vibrations of the impala engine on the endless pavement, Dean's breath in the driver's seat, the heat of the gun barrel in his hand.

At twenty-three, in a small town of Cold Oak, Sam dodged a killing blow from a man called Jake. A man Dean killed only moments later, the blast from his double barrel shotgun rendering the man's face unrecognizable. Weeks later, the demon that killed their mother went up in flames, Sam tracking the faint sulphur smell across the states, a hound dog with nothing else to live for but the kill. Their years on the road became soaked in the blood of monsters, the frenzy of patched up wounds, the silent conversations no one else understood.

By the time Sam turned twenty-five, he knew. He could taste it in the air as clearly as he could taste the acrid stench of demon flesh. And he wondered if he'd always known, even back when his seven year old self stared into the bathroom mirror, that one ice chip of an eye staring back. Him and Dean, they were heading towards something larger than the world itself, something so massive that his skin tingled from its promise, his senses buzzed, his heart ached.

At twenty-six he looked into the eyes of a fallen angel, saw his own blue eye staring back, and said yes in a voice so unused that it tore a fiery line down his throat. Such a small sound, a single syllable, more a whisper than a word, and yet, he could now hear. A shriek of thousand voices raised up to the sky, praying for mercy what would never come. A howl of wind, angry and violent as if the existence itself was rebelling. Dean's agonizing cry as hands that were not Sam's any more grabbed that loved face in a tight grip. And as he watched the world burn through two blue eyes, blood running over cement in rivers, bones snapping under his feet like fragile ocean shells, he knew that this was what was meant to be, this is where it had all led. His brother by his right hand, once green eyes now black as coal, as faithful today as he'd been from the moment Sam was born. An army of demons at his command and God himself quivering in fear.

This was his destiny, the destiny of that one blue eye staring back in the chipped bathroom mirror.

And somewhere deep inside this fallen angel, there was finally blessed silence.